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JONAS GALUSHA,

THE FIFTH GOVERNOR OF VERMONT

A MEMOIR

READ BEFORE THE

Vermont Historical Society,

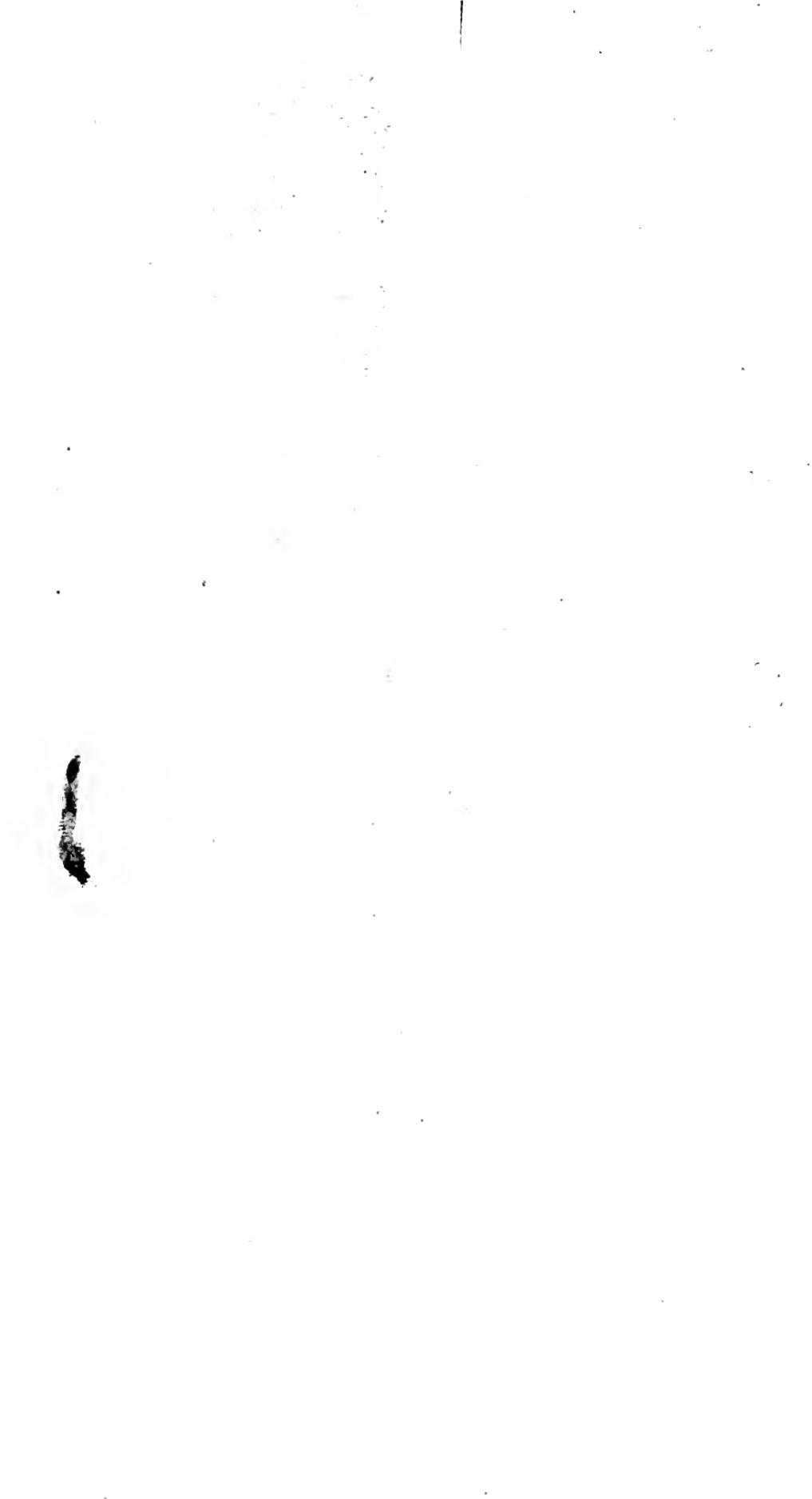
IN PRESENCE OF THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VERMONT,

AT MONTPELIER, 16 OCTOBER 1866.

—
BY REV. PLINY H. WHITE.

—
MONTPELIER:
E. P. WALTON, PRINTER
1866.



*Sketches
with regard to
Hiland Hall*

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JONAS GALUSHA: THE FIFTH GOVERNOR OF VERMONT.

BY REV. PLINY H. WHITE.

THE GALUSHA FAMILY is one of the oldest in New England. Early in the seventeenth century, Jacob Galusha, when about eight years old, was abducted from Wales by persons interested in an estate to which he was likely to become an heir. He was sent to New England, settled near Plymouth, Mass., and became the ancestor of a numerous family. He had two sons, Jacob and Daniel. Daniel, the younger of them, had three sons, Jacob, Daniel and Jonas. Jacob married Lydia Huntington, daughter of Matthew Huntington of Preston, C't., and a relative of Gov. Samuel Huntington. He was a farmer and blacksmith, in moderate circumstances, but of unblemished character, sound judgment, and much native shrewdness. They had five sons, the third of whom, Jonas, afterwards governor of Vermont, was born in Norwich, C't. 11 February 1753.* When he was less than three

* Jacob Galusha had four wives. By the first, Lydia Huntington, he had five sons, David, Jacob, Jonas, Amos, and Elijah; and four daughters, Mary, Olive, Lydia, and Anne. By the second, Thankful King, he had one daughter, Lucy. By the third, Desire (Andens) McTeal, he had four sons, Daniel, Benjamin, Ezra, and Eliast; and two daughters, Desire and Sally. By his fourth wife, Abigail Foster, he had no children. She was a woman of great strength and longevity. In her 89th year she was baptized by immersion and joined the Baptist Church in Shaftsbury, Vt., and when ninety years old, she rode in a wagon fifty miles in a day with no serious inconvenience. With reference to the temper and disposition of his four wives, Mr. Galusha remarked, in his shrewd way:—"I have been twice in heaven, once on earth, and once in hell."

years old, he fell into a small pond of water, near which he, with his brothers and sisters, had been playing, and remained in the water till his sister Mary ran a quarter of a mile and called the father, who came, rescued him from the water, and succeeded in restoring him.

In 1769, Jacob Galusha and his family removed to Salisbury, Ct., and thence in the spring of 1775, to Shaftsbury, Vt.* None of his sons had received any education, except the very limited one that was afforded by the common schools of that period; but their strength of mind and energy of character soon made them leading men in the town, and to some extent in the State. David, the eldest of the brothers, was the representative of Shaftsbury in 1779. Jacob, the second, was elected town clerk in 1784, and held the office forty-one years. He was also justice of the peace for a long term, and the representative of Shaftsbury, for ten consecutive years, 1801-1811.† Amos, the fourth, served in the revolutionary army, and, during the administrations of Jefferson and Madison, rendered them very efficient support by his contributions to the periodical press.‡

Soon after his removal to Shaftsbury, Jonas Galusha set up a shop for making nails, and also carried on a farm for his brother David. He became at length a farmer on his own account, and pursued that employment through life, except as he was withdrawn from it by official engagements. Possessing a strong

* It is worthy of remark, that several of the most distinguished early families of Vermont, including, besides the Galushas, the Allens, Chipmans, and Chittendens, were emigrants from Salisbury.

† He was born 8 January 1751, and died 25 July 1834.

‡ He died about 1849. Elijah, the youngest brother, married Beniah, daughter of Governor Thomas Chittenden, but lost his life within a year or two by an accidental injury in a sawmill at Arlington. He left one son. His widow married Col. Matthew Lyon.

constitution and vigorous physical powers, he was able, even to advanced age, to do the full work of a man, with hoe, scythe, sickle, or axe, and never required any of his laborers to go beyond what he himself did. Notwithstanding his constant employment on the farm, he found opportunity to add to his stock of knowledge by reading, and to cultivate practical wisdom by observation and reflection.

When the revolutionary struggle commenced, he took an active part in favor of the independence of the colonies. He was a member of a company, commanded by his brother David, in Col. Seth Warner's regiment of Green Mountain Boys, and did service in Canada in the fall of 1775. Prior to the battle of Bennington, 16 August 1777, two companies of militia had been organized in Shaftsbury, one of them under his captaincy, the other under that of Amos Huntington; but Captain Huntington being taken prisoner at Ticonderoga, the two companies were consolidated under Capt. Galusha. When he received orders from Col. Moses Robinson to march his company to Bennington, he was sick in bed, recovering from a fever, but he promptly called out his men and led them to the scene of action.

On the day of the battle, his company had occasion, on account of a bend in the Walloomsac River, to ford the river twice, on their way to attack Baum's rear. He was so weak that, at the first crossing, a soldier insisted upon carrying him over, but excitement gave him such strength that he crossed the second ford without assistance, and was in the hottest of the battle during the rest of the day. After Baum

was defeated, and the victors were resting from their fatigue, or were scattered about the field, gathering up the spoils, Burgoyne came up with reinforcements, and the Green Mountain Boys were compelled to fight and win the battle a second time. During this second struggle, he was brought within easy range of one of Burgoyne's pieces of artillery, from which two heavy charges of grape-shot were sent all around him, furrowing the ground at his feet, and cutting the bushes at each side of him and over his head, but leaving him unscathed.* He continued in active military service till the surrender of Burgoyne, on which occasion he was present at the head of his company; and at several other times he, with his company, was under arms for a few days or weeks, as approaching danger might require.

In October 1778, when not quite twenty-six years old, he married Mary Chittenden, daughter of Gov. Thomas Chittenden, by whom he had five sons and four daughters. †

In March 1781 he was elected Sheriff of the County of Bennington. The duties of the office at that early period of the history of Vermont were onerous and perplexing to the very last degree. The great mass of the people were extremely poor and deeply in debt,

* In this battle, the life of one of Galusha's men was preserved in a somewhat remarkable manner. He came in contact with a tory, with whom he had previously been acquainted, and a hand-to-hand conflict ensued, in which the tory succeeded in throwing him to the earth, and was just about to inflict a fatal wound. Just at that moment a Hessian soldier came running towards them, and, in his haste, mistaking the character of the combatants, ran the tory through with his bayonet and released the wing. Much to the Hessian's surprise, he soon found himself a prisoner to the man whose life he had preserved.

† She was born in 1758 and died 20 April 1794. Their children were, 1. Clarissa, b. 9 Sept 1759, m. Dr. Daniel Huntington, d. May 1823.—2. Mary, b. 23 May 1782, m. Norman Hinsdill, d. 31 May 1827.—3. Jonas, b. 17 July 1783, m. Electa Hinsdill, d. 2 June 1861.—4. Nancy, b. 28 December 1784, m. Asa Billings of Royalton, d. 16 October 1848.—5. Truman, b. 30 September 1786, m. 1st, 17 Sept. 1809, Lydia Loomis, (d. 27 June 1818,) and 2d., 25 Dec. 1819, Hannah Chittenden, a daughter of Noah Chittenden and grand-daughter of Gov. Thomas Chittenden. She died 29 May 1828. By the first wife he had two sons and one daughter, and by the second, one son and three daughters. In 1823 he removed to Jericho, and became and continued to be a leading man in the town and county. He was the representative of Jericho in the General Assembly in 1827, 1828, and 1830, a member of the Constitutional Convention in 1836 and 1837, and a Judge of Chittenden County Court in 1848 and 1850. He was once a candidate for Con-

and their unfortunate condition was greatly aggravated by the want of a cash market for their produce, and by the depreciation of the currency which took place at the close of the Revolutionary War. The laws, too, for the collection of debts were very severe, not only subjecting all the debtor's property, except the barest necessities, to attachment and execution, but making his person liable to imprisonment, with no possibility of release but by paying the debt.* The criminal laws were also cruel and inhuman. Among the punishments which they authorized were, whipping, setting in the stocks, cutting off the ears, and branding with a red-hot iron. † There is still extant in the Secretary of State's office, an account of Jonas Galusha against the State, to the amount of £10, 4s. 6d. for executing the sentence of the Supreme Court upon Abel Geer, by cutting off his right ear and branding him upon the forehead with the letter C.

Besides these things, of themselves sufficient to make the office of sheriff disagreeable to a man of ordinary sensibilities, there were at that time political disturbances which greatly increased the labors and responsibilities of the office, and made it still more irksome. The State had been organized only a short time, and opposition to its authority was still made in

gross, but just before the election he declined in favor of another candidate. He died 12 June 1839, 6, Elm, 6, 18 June 1790, m. Betsey Bottum. In 1810 and 1812 he studied law with Hon. Richard Skinner, but, becoming a Christian, he turned his attention to the study of Theology, became a Baptist minister, and was soon known as an eloquent and effective preacher. His first settlement was in Whitesboro, N. Y., in 1816, and he continued there sixteen years. During a part of that time he was agent for Columbia College, D. C., and had great success in raising funds for it. He was among the most active of the founders of Hamilton Theological Seminary, and spent about a year in its service at the time of its greatest embarrassment. In 1824 he became pastor of the Broad Street Baptist Church in Utica, went thence to Rochester, and at a later period was for several years pastor in Perry. In 1840 he visited England in behalf of a philanthropic enterprise in which he was interested. In 1841 he became pastor in Lockport, and continued there till his death, 6 January 1856. He was a man of fine pulpit talents, of gentlemanly manners, of an eminently benevolent spirit, and of distinguished usefulness in his denomination. His remarkable success in procuring donations for religious and charitable purposes gained for him the *sobriquet*—"King of Beggars." 7, Martin, 6, 1 January 1792, m. 29 September 1815, Almira Cobb, removed to the State of New York in 1818, and is still living in Rochester. 8, Sophia, 6, January 1794, d. 16 April 1794. 9, Jonas, who died in infancy.

* State's State Papers, p. 320, 362, 158.

† Ib. p. 333.

some places, particularly in the South part of Windham County, where an active and stubborn, if not numerous party upheld the jurisdiction of New York. Conciliatory measures having failed to bring these men to submission, a coercive policy was adopted. Several of the leaders were arrested, tried by the Supreme Court, and banished from the State, under penalty of death if they returned. One of these had accepted from Gov. Clinton of New York a commission as Sheriff of Cumberland County, and two others had accepted commissions as Colonel and Lt. Colonel of an imaginary regiment of militia in the same County. After their banishment, they were encouraged by Gov. Clinton, with promises of support and military protection, to return to Vermont, defy its authority, and attempt to overthrow its government. From time to time, as they made themselves obnoxious, they were arrested, and committed to jail in Bennington; and during most of the year 1783 and a part of 1784, one or more of them was almost continually in jail. They were allowed the free use of their pens, and used them freely in letters and newspaper articles defaming the sheriff, jailer, and all other Vermont officials, and laboring to excite popular sympathy in their own favor.

It was not a little to Mr. Galusha's credit that, in the midst of peculiar trials and responsibilities, he so acquitted himself in the Sheriff's office as to command the confidence of the government and people, and to retain the office till he parted with it by voluntary resignation. There was in his character a blending of the energetic with the urbane, by which he commended

himself to all with whom he had official intercourse. He had an instinctive knowledge of human nature, and so great skill in managing men that he rarely failed of bringing the most refractory to his own terms. On one occasion when he went to serve a process, the respondent seized an axe, and swore he would take the sheriff's life sooner than be arrested. Mr. Galusha was unarmed, except with a slender stick, but assured the man that he would teach him better than to threaten his life, and would have him in irons in less than an hour. Partly by reasoning and partly by jesting, he talked the axe out of the man's hand, and accomplished the arrest within the time limited. On another occasion, the respondent armed himself with a walnut club, and backed into a corner of the room, declaring that he would not be taken. "Yes, you will," replied Galusha, "but I'm in no hurry." "No," was the quick response, "I will not be taken alive." "Then," said Galusha, "you need to be better armed than with a club. I will give you a chance to get your gun and bayonet, and then I'll take you; but I'm sorry to say that I've nothing but a summons to take you with." The man, ashamed of having made such a demonstration against a harmless writ of summons, speedily threw down his weapon and submitted to the process. One of the last of his official acts was the dispersal of a party of "Shay's men," who, upon the suppression of Shay's rebellion in Massachusetts, fled to Vermont early in 1787, and called a meeting at Shaftsbury, for the purpose of setting on foot a similar movement in this State. Mr. Galusha, in company with Gideon Olin, and other prominent citizens, attend-

ed the meeting, warned them of the danger to which they were exposing themselves by their illegal proceedings, and notified them to quit the town forthwith. In the spring of 1787, he resigned the office, having held it six years.

He was not again in public life till 1792, when he was elected a member of the second Council of Censors, the first that met after the admission of Vermont into the Union. This body proposed several material changes in the Constitution, among which were the establishment of a Senate, and of an advisory Council of four, and the limitation of the right of representation to towns having not less than forty families. He used all his influence in favor of these propositions, both in the Council and with the people, but none of them secured the popular assent. In 1793 he was elected a member of the Governor's Council, a body of twelve men, clothed with powers which rendered it nearly equivalent to a co-ordinate branch of the legislature. By successive elections, he held this office six years, 1793-98. In the mean time, his wife had died, and he had married, as his second wife, Patty Sammons, daughter of Timothy Sammons of Huntington, L. I.*

In 1795 he was elected an assistant Judge of Bennington County Court, and held the office three years. The legislature of 1798, which met at Vergennes, was strongly federal in politics, and as that party had not been in power for many years, its appetite for office had become ravenous in the extreme. Democratic officeholders were removed and their places supplied with

* She was born in 1764, and died, childless, 10 November 1797. Her death was thus noticed in a contemporary newspaper:—"In Shaftsbury, Nov. 10, 1797, Mrs. Patty Galusha, the amiable consort of Jonas Galusha."

federalists, with such an unsparring hand, that the place, where the sessions of this body were held, was long known by the name of "the Vergennes slaughter-house." Mr. Galusha was one of the victims, but when his party regained the ascendancy in 1800, he was restored to the judgeship, and remained in the office seven years, 1800-06. Having been a frequent attendant upon the sessions of the legislature, he was asked why he never came as representative. "Because the freemen do not advise me to," was his reply. In 1800, however, the freemen of Shaftsbury gave him that advice, and he took his seat in the House of Representatives, but on the morning of the second day he resigned his seat, informing the House that he had been elected a Councillor, and had accepted the office. He remained a member of the Council seven successive years, 1800-06.

He was elected a Judge of the Supreme Court in 1807 and again in 1808. This was perhaps the highest tribute that could have been paid to his sound judgment and incorruptible integrity, for he had none of the legal learning usually regarded as an indispensable qualification for that office. His associates on the bench were Judges Tyler and Harrington, both of them remarkable men; the former for his classical learning, high literary culture, ready wit, and prolific authorship; the latter for his prodigious native powers of mind and his entire lack of cultivation. Judge Galusha occupied a position between the two, having neither the polish of Tyler, nor the strength of Harrington, but a practical common sense which made him as useful and acceptable a judge as either

of them. He was on the bench during the celebrated trial of the crew of the "Black Snake," a smuggling vessel on Lake Champlain, whose crew had an affray with a party of revenue officers, and killed two of them; and he charged the jury in that case. In 1807, he was elected, on the part of the Council, United States Senator for the unexpired term of Israel Smith, but he failed to receive the concurrent vote of the House of Representatives.

His third wife, whom he married in June 1808, died in 1809.* The same year he was chosen an Elector of President and Vice President, and with his colleagues, gave the vote of Vermont to James Madison. He was chosen an Elector in 1821, and voted for James Monroe; and in 1825 and 1829, when he voted for John Quincy Adams. The popularity of Isaac Tichenor, who had been governor for eleven years, made it expedient for the republicans to nominate as his opposing candidate in 1809 the man who enjoyed the largest measure of confidence, and could command the greatest number of votes. That man was Jonas Galusha, and with him as their leader the republican party was successful in that campaign. He was re-elected in 1810, 1811, and 1812. In his speech to the legislature in 1812, he urged the adoption of measures co-operating with the general government in carrying on the war with Great Britain, as well as providing for the defence of Vermont against possible invasion from Canada. His recommendations were adopted,

* Her name was Abigail Ward, b. 1770, d. 6 May 1809. She had one child, Abigail, b. 15 April 1809.

and the requisite laws were enacted, but they were so oppressive in their practical operation, that many of the people went over to the federal party. At the election in 1813, he had a large plurality of the votes, but not a majority. The majority of the returned members of the legislature, upon which the election was thus devolved, were republicans, there being four federal majority in the House, and ten republican majority in the Council. But the federal leaders were shrewd and not over-scrupulous, and, finding that by rejecting the entire vote of Colchester for councillors, upon the pretence that a large number of votes had been polled illegally by United States soldiers stationed there, three more federal councillors would be elected and the Joint Assembly brought to a tie, they decided to do so, and the federal majority in the House carried out their purposes in that regard. The Joint Assembly balloted a number of times every day for more than a week without effecting a choice, till at length, on the 21st day of October, the votes were declared to be one hundred and twelve for Martin Chittenden, and one hundred and eleven for Jonas Galusha. The one hundred and twelve republican members immediately signed a certificate that they did, each of them, on that ballot, vote for Jonas Galusha, and claimed that the apparent result should be set aside and another ballot be taken. But the federal majority in the House refused to take any further action, and Martin Chittenden was declared Governor. There is good reason to believe that the result of the ballot was correctly declared, only one hundred and eleven persons in fact voting for

Galusha, and Oliver Ingham of Canaan having withheld his vote. By what means he was induced to do so it is impossible now to ascertain.

In 1814 Mr. Galusha was the delegate from Shaftsbury to the Constitutional Convention. After the restoration of peace with Great Britain, many of the causes which had agitated the people of Vermont ceased to exist, and the republican party regained their ascendancy. Mr. Galusha continued to be their candidate for governor, and in 1815 he was elected by a handsome majority. His speech to the legislature judiciously avoided all topics that could rekindle the expiring embers of party spirit. He alluded in suitable terms to the close of war and the grateful return of peace, but employed himself mainly with the business of the State. He was re-elected, year by year, by constantly increasing majorities, till 1819, when his competing candidate had only a few more than a thousand votes. He then announced his determination to remain no longer in public life, and in this he persisted, though urged to the contrary, not only by his political friends, but by many of the adverse party. The legislature adopted and presented an address, in which they said—"In discharging the duties of "councillor, judge, and governor, you have ever "merited and received the approbation of your fellow "citizens." He was earnestly requested to be a candidate for the United States Senate, which had he been, his election was morally certain, but he rejected the honor, nor did he again ever hold office, except that in 1822, he was again a member of the Constitutional Convention, and the President of that body. A few

years before, he had married his fourth wife, Mrs. Nabby (Atwater) Beach, * and he now retired to private life, in which he enjoyed a serene and honored old age, till having nearly attained his eighty-second year, he died, 25 September 1834. †

In person, Gov. Galusha was rather stoutly built, about five feet and nine inches in height, and at the same time of a very active temperament, as was indicated by his light complexion, blue eyes, and light hair inclining to be sandy. His dress was the plain but neat dress of a respectable farmer, who had mingled much with his fellow men, and was neither ignorant nor unmindful of the requirements of society. In conversation he was ready, though not copious, and he had a vein of humor which rendered him very agreeable socially. He was fond of domestic life, and singularly fortunate in his domestic relations. The four wives whom he successively married were cheerful, amiable, and pious women, and he lived with them in harmony and happiness. His children were well trained, and all of them who survived childhood became professors of religion, one of them an eminent minister in the Baptist denomination.

Though not himself a member of any church, he was, in the estimation of those best competent to judge, a true Christian. He maintained family worship in all its forms, was known to observe private devotions, was an habitual attendant upon public worship and at social meetings, and frequently took an active part in

* His marriage was thus announced in one of the papers of that day:—“In Cavendish, Feb. 21, 1818, Jonas Galusha, and Mrs. Nabby Beach, a lady of unblemished reputation, and possessing in an eminent degree, those amiable female virtues, whose price is far above rubies.” She was born 2 April 1791, and died 30 July 1831.

† His funeral sermon, which is still extant in manuscript, was preached by the Rev. Warham Walker, from 2 Sam. 13:38. “Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?”

the latter. In his daily life he was also such as a Christian should be, modest, gentle, amiable, upright, faithful to every obligation. He was the first Governor of Vermont, who introduced the word CHRIST into the date of his proclamations. When nearly seventy-nine years of age, he attended a "protracted meeting" at Manchester, and took an active part in its exercises; as the result of which, he was aroused to a sense of the duty of making a public profession of religion, and announced his intention to do so, but was prevented from accomplishing his purpose by a stroke of paralysis which he experienced soon after, and from which he never recovered. During the protracted sickness which ensued, his cheerfulness, patience, resignation, and Christian conversation bore witness to the genuine piety that was in his soul.

Integrity and impartiality were such marked traits in his character that he was not seldom chosen as an arbitrator even by his enemies. His forbearance was such that he never resented an injury, but endeavored by his words and actions to make his enemies his friends. Benevolence to the poor was another of his distinguishing characteristics. He made their wants his own, and relieved them accordingly. It was no unusual thing for him, when, in the discharge of his official duties as sheriff, he had been made the instrument of reducing a poor man to still deeper poverty, to furnish the unfortunate debtor the means of extricating himself from embarrassment. He also gave freely to various benevolent societies, and took an active part in their affairs. He was President of the Bennington County Colonization Society, and Bible

Society, and one of the Vice-Presidents of the Vermont Bible Society. When the temperance reformation had proceeded as far as the total-abstinence movement, he gave his influence and example in its favor, and though he was far advanced in years, and had, all his life-time, been accustomed to the moderate use of alcoholic liquors, he at once abandoned the habit, though not without fear that the sudden change might affect him injuriously.

He was painfully conscious of the deficiencies of his early education, and feelingly alluded to them in his first executive address. But his quick perception, his retentive memory, his sound judgment, his ready wit, and his prompt command of all his intellectual powers and resources, were qualities which stood him in better stead, and more amply fitted him for his various duties, than the best scholastic education could have done without them. He had a rich fund of anecdote, upon which he drew frequently and with great effect. He was not addicted to public speaking, but could, when occasion required, express himself clearly and forcibly. His executive addresses were short, rarely exceeding in length four printed octavo pages, and frequently not more than half or two thirds as long. In style they were quite unadorned, but concise and perspicuous. To the contrary, his proclamations for Fasts and Thanksgivings were of unusual length; sometimes, indeed, nearly as long as his messages, indicating that he was more accustomed to thinking and writing upon religious subjects than upon political affairs.

Politically he was a democrat of the Jeffersonian school, and it may shed some light upon the pedigree of modern parties, to notice, that, without any change of his political views, he voted successively for Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, and Adams. Though in office nearly all the time for forty years, he was not an office-seeker. Rather did office seek him, on account of his eminent fitness for it. He accepted it from a sense of duty rather than from choice, and while in it sought to secure the public good rather than his own. Perhaps Vermont has never had a governor more worthy of the eulogy which Fulke Greville pronounced upon Sir Henry Sidney:—"He was such a "governor as sought not to make an end of the State "for himself, but to plant his own ends in the pros- "perity of his country."



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